

result, the artist is the best art-producer, the critic the best art-judge.

But what are the qualifications of the critic? for qualifications he must possess, as well as the artist. I have attributed to him the spirit of knowledge and of love,—and these every genuine critic of art must possess.—a profound knowledge of its principles, to which every opinion should be referred, and some technical and practical knowledge of it also, with “no obscure notions gleaned from the past,—no popular maxims cherished as truths.” He should be capable of understanding general and abstract truth; susceptible to the impressions of nature, and to all the mighty influences of life; fully alive to beauty, and capable of discerning and of disentangling it, however involved amid defects. Every reader of a poem, or spectator of a building or picture, should seek to imbibe the spirit of the work before him if he would derive the utmost profit from it: by so doing he may rise for a moment to the same eminence, and be wrapt into the same sphere of thought as the author in its conception. But he may be incapable of doing this: if so, he is not qualified to be its critic; its light has not yet reached him; his perceptions are not educated up to it, or it is beyond his intellectual powers. The fine arts are dependent on many sciences—as painting and sculpture on anatomy, architecture and music on geometry,—and these a writer must know something of before he can be a critic of art; and such acquirements, moreover, should be engrafted on, and adorn and strengthen, a mind acute and observant; that adores the beautiful, and is sensitive to the throbbing life around. Great knowledge, also, of extant art is necessary to the critic, that he may be able to detect plagiarisms; as well as an intimate knowledge of the elements, and an acquaintance with their capabilities of producing beauty; as a want of them must lead to error, and he will attribute beauties to the artist that belong to the elements he employs, and which he could not possibly have avoided; or, in the case of architecture, may be deceived by a mechanical excellence traceable no higher than to the mason or joiner: critics do not always distinguish between the design of the architect and the mechanical merit of the execution.

There are things it is important should be kept in view by the critic: he must never forget that art—the spiritual expression of nature and of human history and life,—is an infinity; and that the artist is all his days a student; that the happiest execution of the loftiest genius is but approximation. He must remember that, where the conception is great, little errors of execution may be pardoned; that great beauties should hide a multitude of small faults; a maxim that has been acknowledged and acted upon by great and genuine critics in all times; the origin of many figures of speech being found in the desire to cover such unavoidable errors or deviations in the writings of the great poets. “The more original,” says a last century writer, “any performance is, the more it is liable to deviate; for cautious stupidity is always in the right.” He should not overlook the fact that the artist works under certain restrictions; that every medium of human utterance is necessarily imperfect; that no artist can give us his idea in the full power and beauty of its conception, but his thought, weakened or defaced in its execution by his vehicle of expression: there is no language, it is said, that can fully and perfectly express all the ideas and sensations of man, so numerous and imperceptible are their shades; and the observation may be extended to the expression of the fine arts: besides, many a great art-soul may have a natural impediment in its utterance, for which allowance must be made in judging of its works. Among the best judges some difference of opinion will inevitably prevail upon great works of art. “Where art is concerned,” observes Mrs. Jameson, “the faculty of seeing becomes itself an art.” The faculty of delight in beauty needs to be educated like all our faculties; and unless under equal culture two men can scarcely see the same object: their constitution and relationship with

nature are different; and according to their sympathy with nature, and the strength of their mental faculties, is its effect upon them: they see it through unequal media,—visions influenced by different degrees of mental culture and original power.

From our sketch of the true critic let us turn to the critic of the day. It is a self-evident, and we might almost say, a geometrical fact, that no man can be fully estimated but by his equal or superior; yet men have pronounced judgment on works of art whose minds never dwell for a moment in that region of thought to which they belong, and who can no more comprehend them than the lesser body can contain the greater. Men who are naturally deficient in feeling and imagination can, of course, have but small appreciation for anything beyond mechanical dexterity; and the higher the quality of the work the more likely is it to be lost upon them. Works are preferred in which the higher qualities have been sacrificed to the lower, intellectual to mere sensuous beauty, true grandeur to magnificent display; and the tendency of their strictures would at first sight appear to be to strangle genius in its birth; for on such, of course, the finest strokes of nature and passion are lost. Such must judge by rule; and anything out of the beaten track they will not recognise. They must prefer the laborious compositions of study to those of true genius. Commonplace, unimaginative, and cold correctness they will applaud; but the man who hangs a fresh garland on the shrine of art, or plants a new stem, they cannot understand; for the more original any work of art the more liable is it to transgress their boundary and go beyond the horizon of their intellect.

Not only is defective nature, want of largeness and comprehensiveness of soul, evinced in art criticism, but even ignorance of the grossest kind. How often does the critic find fault with a work because it has not the qualities belonging to some other and higher walk of art, thus running counter to the first principle of criticism, which, as Pope says, is to consider the nature of the piece and intent of its author. They resemble some critics of Homer and the great poets, who blame their author for not doing what he never designed to do, and which was inconsistent with the nature and scope of his work. Too often they go further, and rail at him for his choice of subject, the walk of art which he pursues; forgetting that most men succeed better in one department than in another, and that each man's task allotted by heaven is to do that which he can do best.\*

S. H.

#### OUR FEMALE POPULATION.

##### DOMESTIC SCHOOLS.

IT was with much pleasure that I read a letter which appeared in your journal of October 11, from “C. M. E.,” on the condition of the poor, especially of the female population. The writer well insists on the necessity of “making the poor fit” for those dwellings which, in the form of the Model Lodging Houses, are now in every direction being erected for them. The education of our female poor is a matter of such vast importance, that the subject should be pressed from all sides, and brought, if possible, under the immediate notice of our gracious Queen and her philanthropic consort, that some decisive and effectual steps may be taken to carry out so desirable an object. In some countries, the youth are educated at the charge of the Government, to do their duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them. In our own land (blessed above others in many respects) this point is as yet neglected. Feeble efforts to supply this want are made by a few individuals in some of our provincial towns, where the girls are more than commonly felt evils, resulting from the number of young girls leaving schools without employment, and hopelessly ignorant how and where to obtain any. We have our infant and national schools for the instruction of children, poor houses and prisons for the aged poor and criminals. These institutions are established

and supported by Government. To these may be added those objects which a benevolent public are ever ready to promote,—Bagged Schools, for gathering in the most destitute of our children for instruction,—female penitentiaries, to receive those who have destroyed their own happiness. But where is any effort made commensurate with these undertakings to educate and train our young scholars in habits of practical usefulness? Surely at that most critical period of life, when our youth begin to be conscious of their own independence, and struggle to assert it by a more self-willed line of conduct,—surely, then, more than ever should we, as a nation, endeavour so to educate them, that they may, by God's blessing on the effort, prove useful members of the great human family, instead of walking our streets cursed and cursing, ending a short existence, either in the bitterness of penitence in a penitentiary, or in starving misery at home.

If others would bear their testimony, and raise their voices in behalf of this neglected portion of our female population, some plan for the amendment of the evil might be effectually furthered.

In this town (Southampton) a large sum is talked of as the probable cost of the erection of a gaol. When erected, the country must be further charged for the maintenance of prisoners lodged there. Consider also the money expended upon the erection of poor-houses, and the charge upon every parish for the support of the infirm sick and vicious sent there. It will be urged that these are necessary burdens; but if our Christian land can testify its spirit of forgiveness by doing so much for the vicious and criminal, might we not reasonably hope that it will be ready to spend what would be necessary for the purchase or erection of a suitable home, in which girls might be received and trained for domestic service, and rescued from the prison or the penitentiary? Let such a home be procured, and such an institution be established, and I hesitate not to say that it will support itself. No supplies from Government, no rates from a parish, will be required to keep a training school of this description at work. A small effort at a domestic school has been made for young girls in this town, and the effort has been blessed beyond expectation, as far as those it is intended to benefit have been concerned. Parents are willing to part with the weekly sum of two or three shillings towards the maintenance of their children in the school. The benefits of the school are so prized that they consider it a privilege to gain admittance for a child, and joyfully and regularly pay the sum required. These payments, added to the earnings of the girls in school by industrial occupation, would, without any doubt, support the institution, but it must needs be launched into existence. What is required for the efficient working of such an institution is a conveniently arranged building. The subject is of too much importance to be discussed in one letter, but if any read this who have hearts to feel and money to give to those who will heartily and conscientiously use their bounty for the honest test of a most important principle—i. e. the education of young girls in industrial and domestic employments—let them pity and help these young ones in a town where vice abounds, and temptation besets them at every step: let them have compassion on their mothers, and save them from the bitterest agony a mother's heart can know.

F. M. R.

WRITING AND DRAWING PAPER.—A medal was awarded to Mr. Joynson for his writing papers; and Mr. Wetstone, of North Audley-street, having consideration for the quantity of paper we are weekly obliged to spoil, has sent us some of it to try, including a portion of an enormous sheet of double elephant. Sir Toby Belch speaks of a sheet of paper “big enough for the bed of Ware.” But here was a sheet in which a hundred such beds might have been tied up and sent home. It was 2,500 yards long, 46 inches wide, and weighed nearly seven hundred weight. It is only just to say that the paper seems excellent.

\* To be continued.